



United States
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NEWS RELEASE

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Tennessee's First Watershed Dam Rehabilitation Project Begins in Shelby County

MEMPHIS, TN, April 16 – A groundbreaking ceremony was held today to begin construction work to rehabilitate Mary's Creek Dam located in Shelby County, Tennessee. The work being done by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Shelby County Soil Conservation District in cooperation with the Shelby County Government. The project will protect natural resources and ensure that residents of Mary's Creek watershed area will be safe and protected for years to come.

Attending the ceremony were Gerald Willis, Special Assistant to Bruce Knight, Chief of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, DC; Curry Todd, Tennessee State Representative; Qur'an Folsom, representing U. S. Senator Lamar Alexander; James Ford, State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nashville, TN; Mark Norris, Tennessee State Senator; and other officials and landowners from the surrounding area. John Charles Wilson, Chairman of the Shelby County Soil Conservation District served as Master of Ceremonies for the event.

A Plan and Engineering Design for Mary's Creek Rehabilitation Watershed Project (Structure Site #8) were finalized last fiscal year. The plan will provide for continued public safety and flood control. Additionally, the dam was not originally built with earthquake protection measures. The upgrade of the dam to a Class C (high hazard) dam will require earthquake features to be added to the dam.

John Charles Wilson, Chairman of the local Soil Conservation District and sponsor of the project said, "I am pleased that we are finally getting started on this project that will help protect our citizens and resources in the watershed. We have been concerned for some time now about the erosion damage and the potential for loss of life below the dam."

Mary's Creek Dam #8 was originally built as a low hazard dam, but because of the potential loss of life and downstream damage, the dam is now considered "high" hazard and rehabilitation measures to meet the "high hazard classification are being installed. State Conservationist James Ford said "Mary's Creek Dam #8 had reached the end of its 50-year lifespan and with the installed measures the life of the rehabilitated dam will be extended for an additional 100 years."

Project Funds have been authorized and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide 65 percent of the project's cost through the Federal Dam Rehabilitation Program and the local sponsors will cover the remaining 35 percent.

For additional information about the project, contact the local Soil Conservation District or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Office.

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